

REMARKS

This is intended as a full and complete response to the Office Action dated May 4, 2004, having a shortened statutory period for response set to expire on August 4, 2004. Please reconsider the claims pending in the application for reasons discussed below.

I. In the Drawings

Figure 3 has been amended to include reference number 5. Reference number 5 refers to area 5 of Figure 3, shown more fully in Figure 5.

Figure 3 has also been amended to show O-rings 73' and 73". This is not new matter, as Para. [0026] of the Specification specifically mentions that O-rings may be fitted into grooves 70 and 72.

Figure 4 has been amended to include reference number 4.

Figure 5 has been amended to include reference number 5.

Figure 5 has also been amended to show O-ring 73". This is not new matter, as Para. [0026] of the Specification describes that O-rings may be fitted into groove 72.

Figure 6 has been amended to include reference number 7. Reference number 7 refers to the area 7 of Figure 7. In addition, Figure 6 has been amended to include reference number 8. Reference number 8 refers to area 8 of Figure 6, shown more fully in Figure 8.

Figure 7 has been amended to include reference number 7.

Figure 8 has been amended to include reference number 8.

Figure 9 has been amended to include reference no. "131." This refers to the relief portion of crest 130.

Sheets of drawings have been provided that serve as a replacement set. These include sheets 2, 3 and 4.

II. In the Specification

Para. [0026] has been amended. The statement “(not shown)” provided in reference to O-rings has been removed. O-rings are now specifically shown at 73’ and 73” in Figure 3.

III. In the Claims

Claims 1-47 remain pending in the application and are shown above. Claims 30, 34-36 and 40-46 have been withdrawn. Claims 13-14 and 39 have now been cancelled. New claim 48 has been added.

Claims 1, 3-4, 15-17, 19, 26-27, 29 and 37-38 have been amended.

Claims 1-29, 31-33, 37-39 and 47 are rejected by the Examiner. Reconsideration of rejected claims 1-12, 15-29, 31, 32, 37-38 and 47 is requested for reasons presented below.

A. Discussion of Restriction Requirements

A Restriction Requirement was earlier mailed by the Office on February 6, 2004. The Examiner identified separate Species correlating to selected drawings in the original application. Species 1 was said to be shown by Figures 1-2; Species 2 was said to be shown by Figures 3-5; Species 3 was said to be shown by Figures 6-8; and Species 4 was said to be shown by Figure 9.

An Examiner’s interview was conducted on February 18, 2004. At that time, it was agreed that Figures 3-5 and 6-8 correlate to the same species. That species was elected by the undersigned firm on behalf of the Applicants. A Response to Restriction Requirement was subsequently filed on March 3, 2004. In the Response, Applicants formally elected claims germane to Figures 3-8. Applicants identified these as claims 1-39, 41, 46 and 47. Claims 40 and 42-45 were thus withdrawn.

In the pending Office Action mailed May 4, 2004, the Examiner has identified claims 30, 34-36, 41 and 46 as also “being drawn to a nonelected invention.” The Examiner has withdrawn those claims from consideration, effectively entering a restriction requirement. Applicants provisionally accept the Examiner’s withdrawal as to

claims 30, 34-36, 41 and 46, without traverse. Thus, total withdrawn claims are now claims 30, 34-36 and 40-46.

Applicants would add that claim 33 should also be subject to the same restriction requirement. The subject matter of claim 33 is found in the Specification at Para. [0032]. While this feature is arguably germane to all embodiments, it is disclosed in connection with Figure 9 rather than Figures 3-8. Confirmation is respectfully requested.

B. Rejection of Claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The Examiner has noted that this is an issue of antecedent basis. Claim 3 has now been amended in order to correct the antecedent basis problem. Applicants thank the Examiner for pointing this out.

C. Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 4-18, 31-33, 37-39 and 47 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1, 2, 4-18, 31-33, 37-39 and 47 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,822,081. This patent issued to *Blose* in 1989. Claims 13-14 and 39 have been cancelled.

Claims 1, 37, 38 and 47 are independent claims. Claims 1, 37 and 38 have been amended, while claim 47 has not been amended. Each of these claims includes the limitation of an “undercut groove.” The groove is placed along the end portion of one tubular, and is adapted to receive the nose or end portion of the other tubular. This serves to prevent the nose from separating after the coupling arrangement has been diametrically expanded.

Applicants respectfully submit that this feature is not disclosed in the referenced *Blose* patent. Accordingly, Applicants submit that independent claims 1, 37, 38 and 47 are allowable over the cited patent reference.

Claims 2, 4-12, 15-18 and 31-33 depend from claim 1. Because claim 1 is allowable over the cited *Blose* patent, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2-12, 15-29 and 31-33 are likewise in condition for allowance.

Applicants would add that additional amendments have been provided in independent claims 1, 37 and 38 in order to clarify the claimed inventions. These amendments are not in response to the rejections. In addition, claims 3-4, 15-17, 19, 26-27 and 29 have been amended. These amendments are for purposes of clarifying the inventions or changing dependency, and are not made to narrow the scopes of the respective claims. Likewise, the amendments are not for purposes of distinguishing over a reference.

D. Rejection of Claims 1-29 and 31-33 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claims 1-29 and 31-33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,409, 175 to *Evans* in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,822,081 to *Blose*.

As discussed above, claims 1-29 and 31-33 are allowable over the cited *Blose* patent. Claim 1 is an independent claim, and includes the limitation of “undercut groove.” The groove is placed along the end portion of one tubular, and is adapted to receive the nose or end portion of the other tubular. This serves to prevent the nose from separating as the coupling arrangement is diametrically expanded. This missing feature is not added by the cited *Evans* patent. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-29 and 31-33 remain in condition for allowance.

E. Addition of New Claim 48

Applicant has added new claim 48. This claim contains the limitation of “an undercut groove along the end portion of the second tubular adapted to receive the nose of the first tubular.” Applicant respectfully submits that this feature is not found in the Examiner’s cited references.

F. Comment Regarding Information Disclosure Statements

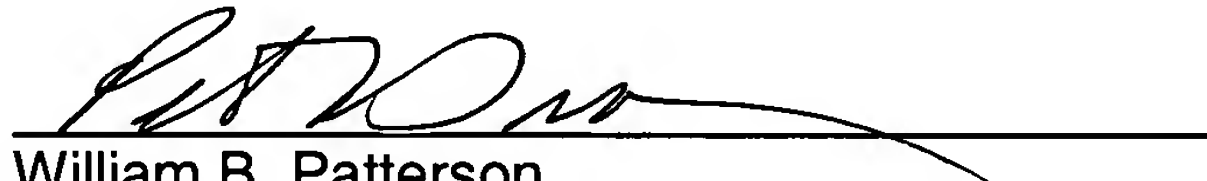
On February 18, 2004, Applicants submitted a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement with PTO Form 1449. Subsequently, on February 20, 2004, an additional Information Disclosure Statement was tendered. The undersigned counsel does not see where the references cited in these supplemental IDS submissions have been considered and initialed by the Examiner. Consideration is respectfully requested.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, the references cited by the Examiner do not, either alone or in combination, teach, show, or suggest the inventions as claimed. The secondary references made of record are noted. However, it is believed that the secondary references are no more pertinent to the Applicant's disclosure than the primary references cited in the Office Action. Therefore, Applicant believes that a detailed discussion of the secondary references is not necessary for a full and complete response to this Office Action.

Having addressed all issues set out in the Office Action, Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request that the claims be allowed.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attorney for Applicants

IN THE DRAWINGS:

Please amend Figure 3 to include reference number 5. Reference number 5 refers to area 5 of Figure 3, shown more fully in Figure 5.

Please amend Figures 4 and 5 to include reference numbers 4 and 5, respectively.

Please amend Figures 3 and 5 to show O-rings –73'– and –73''–.

Please amend Figure 6 to include reference number –7–. Reference number 7 refers to the area 7 of Figure 7.

Please also amend Figure 6 to include reference number –8–. Reference number 8 refers to area 8 of Figure 6, shown more fully in Figure 8.

Please amend Figures 7 and 8 to include reference numbers –7– and –8–, respectively.

Please amend Figure 9 to include reference no. –131–. This refers to the relief portion of crest 130.

Sheets of drawings are provided that serve as a replacement set. These include sheets 2, 3 and 4.

In addition, annotated sheets of drawings showing changes to Figures 3-9 are provided.

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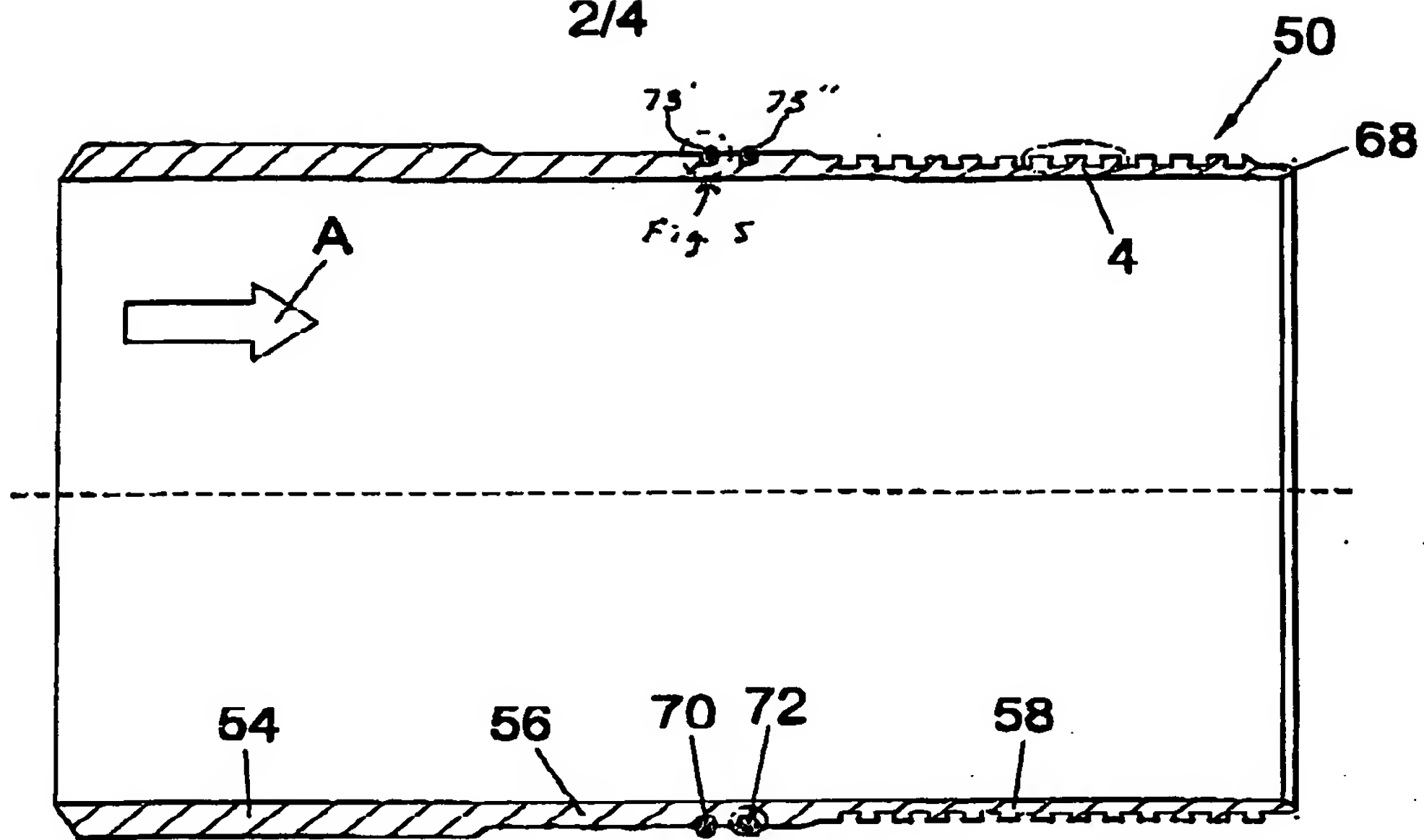


Fig. 3

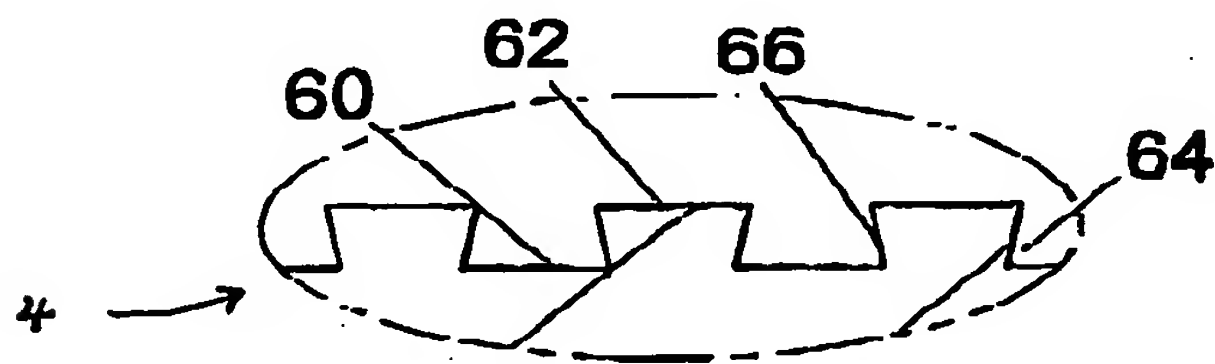


Fig. 4

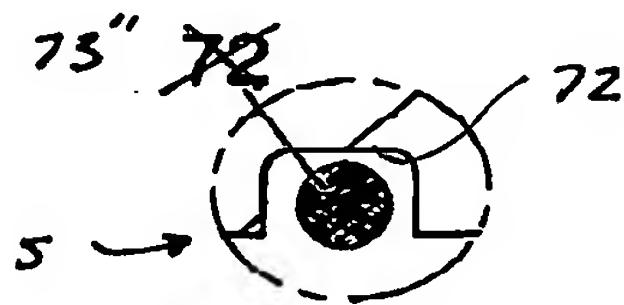


Fig. 5

(inverted for clarity
as well)

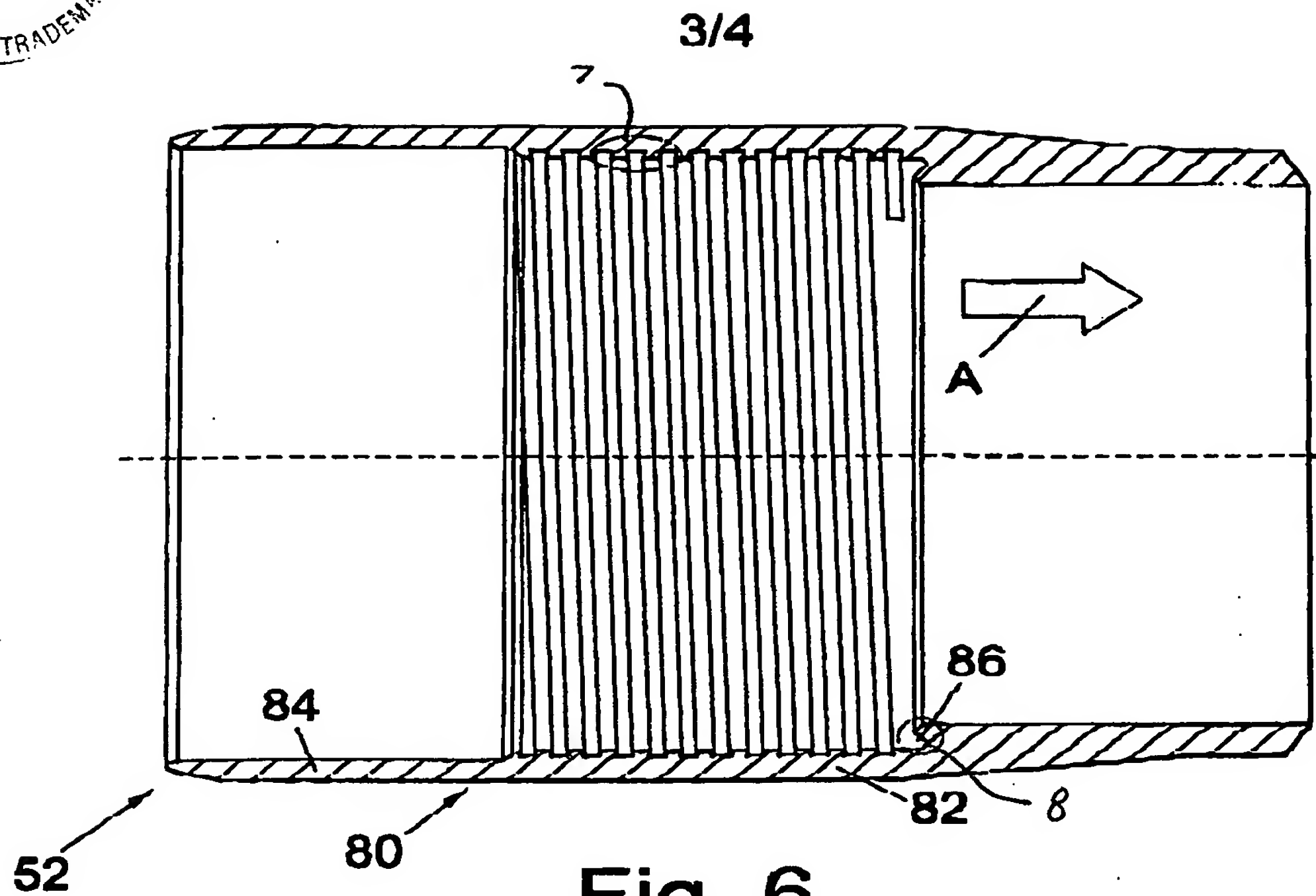


Fig. 6

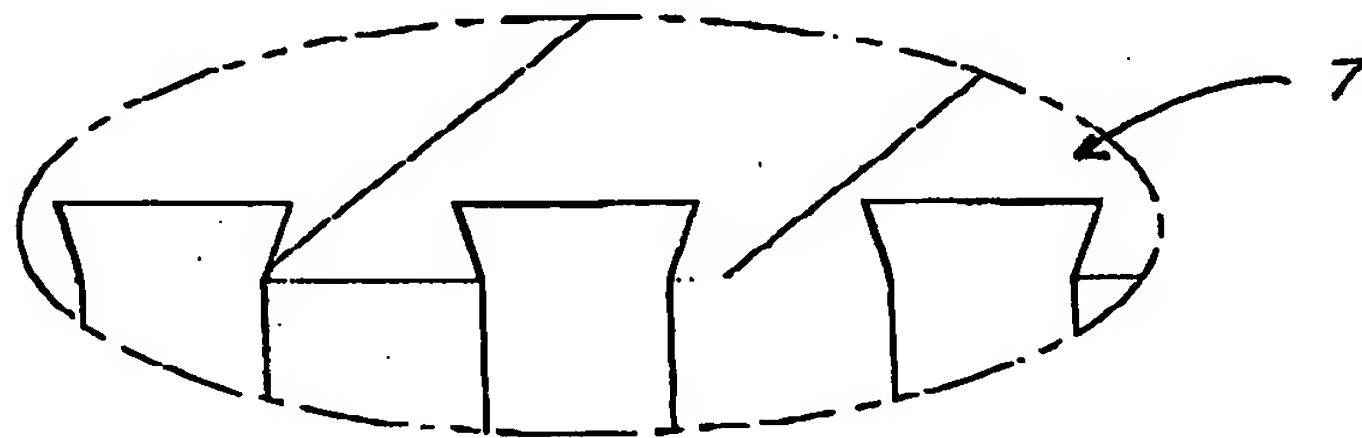


Fig. 7

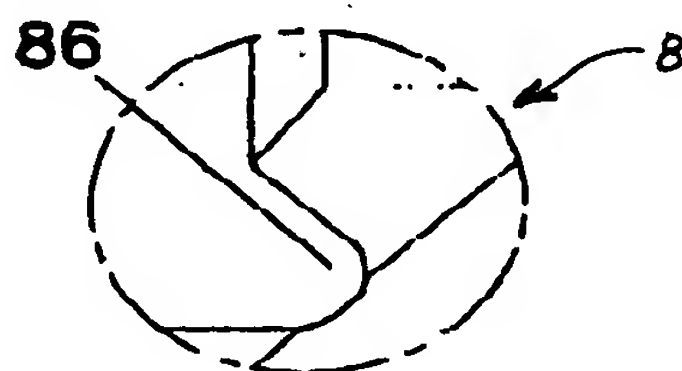


Fig. 8

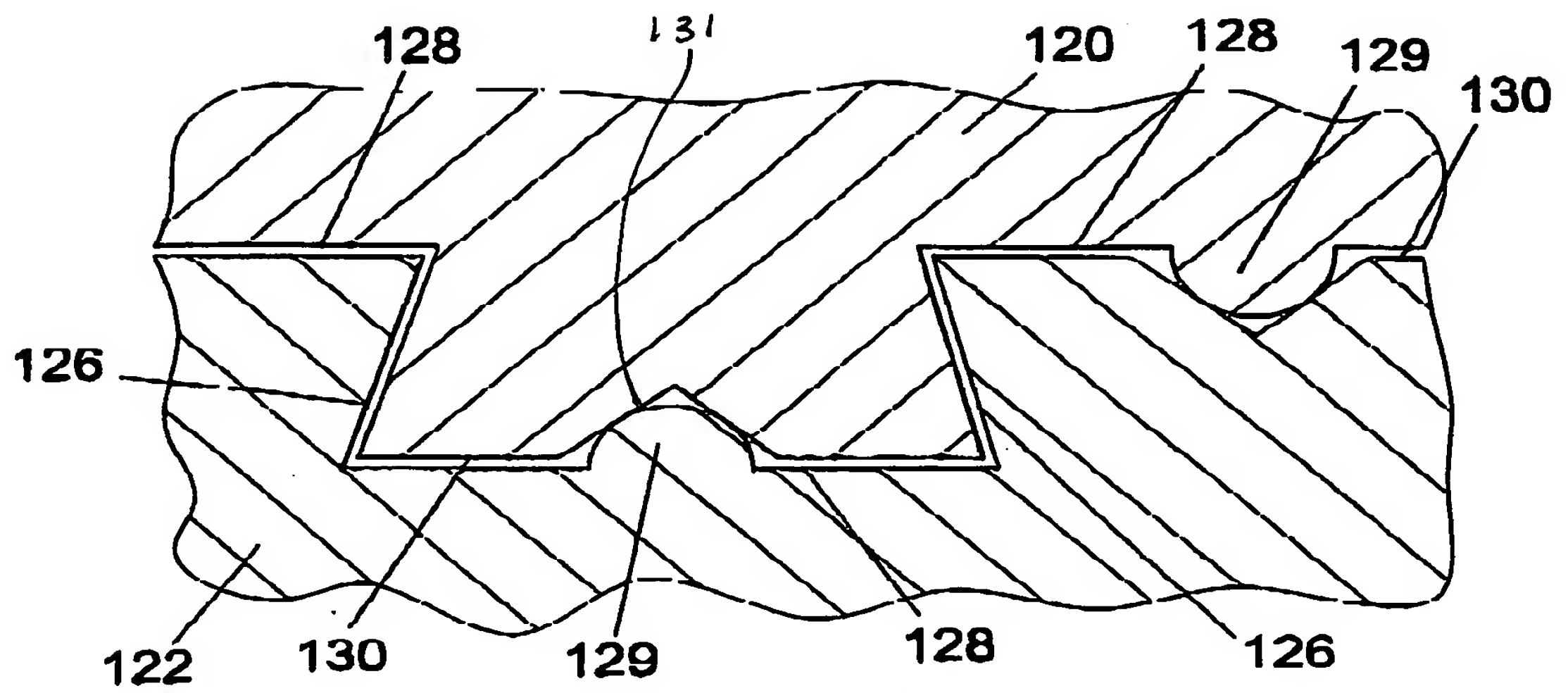


Fig. 9